

An Alphabet of Birds

Joanne Stanbridge

The illustrations in this book
were created for the author's blog Alphadello
and were posted there in 2016.
alphadello.wordpress.com

The pictures were drawn using Micron pens
and coloured with Prismacolor markers.

The books and pamphlets
from which the captions
were chosen
are in the public domain
and can be found on the
Internet Archive website
www.archive.org



A is for Albatross

Instead of the cross, the albatross
Around my neck was hung.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1900).



B is for Budgie

The Budgerigar is a lively little bird, and his action when courting is very comical; for he stands facing his hen, singing his chuckling little song and bobbing his head up and down with a circular motion, as if trying to indicate a halo around her face.

Foreign Birds for Cage and Aviary, by Arthur G. Butler (1910).

C is for Crow

Henry Ward Beecher remarked that
if men were feathered out
and given a pair of wings, a very few of them
would be clever enough to be crows.



“The Behavior of the Crow,” by Charles A. Coburn (1914).

D is for Duck



If, in a group of ducks the drakes are seen to be restlessly swimming back and forth or weaving their way in and out through the crowd as if they were at an afternoon tea, the case looks promising...

one can often tell at a glance whether courtship is in progress or not.

"The Courtship of the Merganser, Mallard, Black Duck, Baldpate, Wood Duck and Bufflehead," by Charles W. Townsend (1916).

E is for Egg

In June of 1921, we discovered a Dove's nest
built upon a Robin's nest...

the few twigs that had been carried in served as
a resting place for one Robin's egg, already
pipped, as well as for the two Dove's eggs.

"General Notes: Mourning Dove," by Bessie D. Reed, (1922)





F is for Flamingo

“Flying round the edge of this soda flat we saw
large numbers of downy young Lesser
Flamingoes...

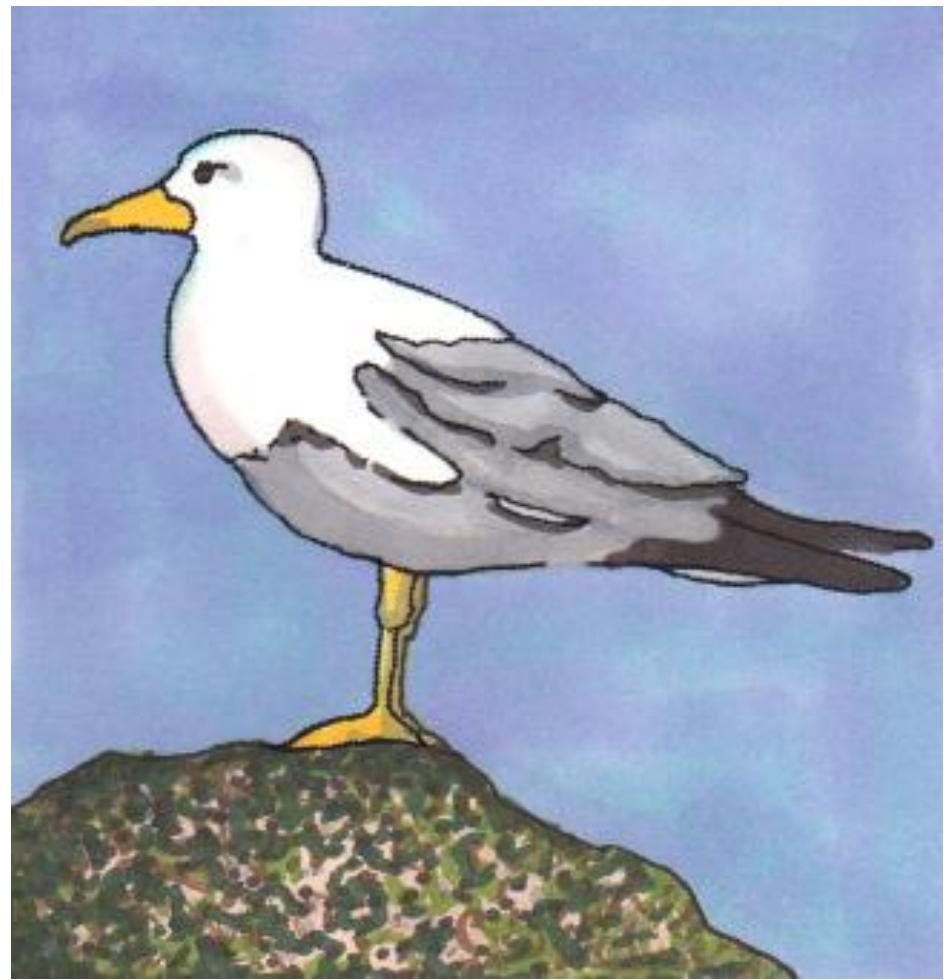
This string extended for possibly two miles, with
groups of youngsters along its length, and with
isolated herds of young birds walking across the
soda by themselves—an amazing sight.”

“The Breeding of Lesser and Greater Flamingoes in East Africa, by L.H. Brown. *Journal of The East Africa Natural History Society*, 1955, volume XXII, pages 159-162.

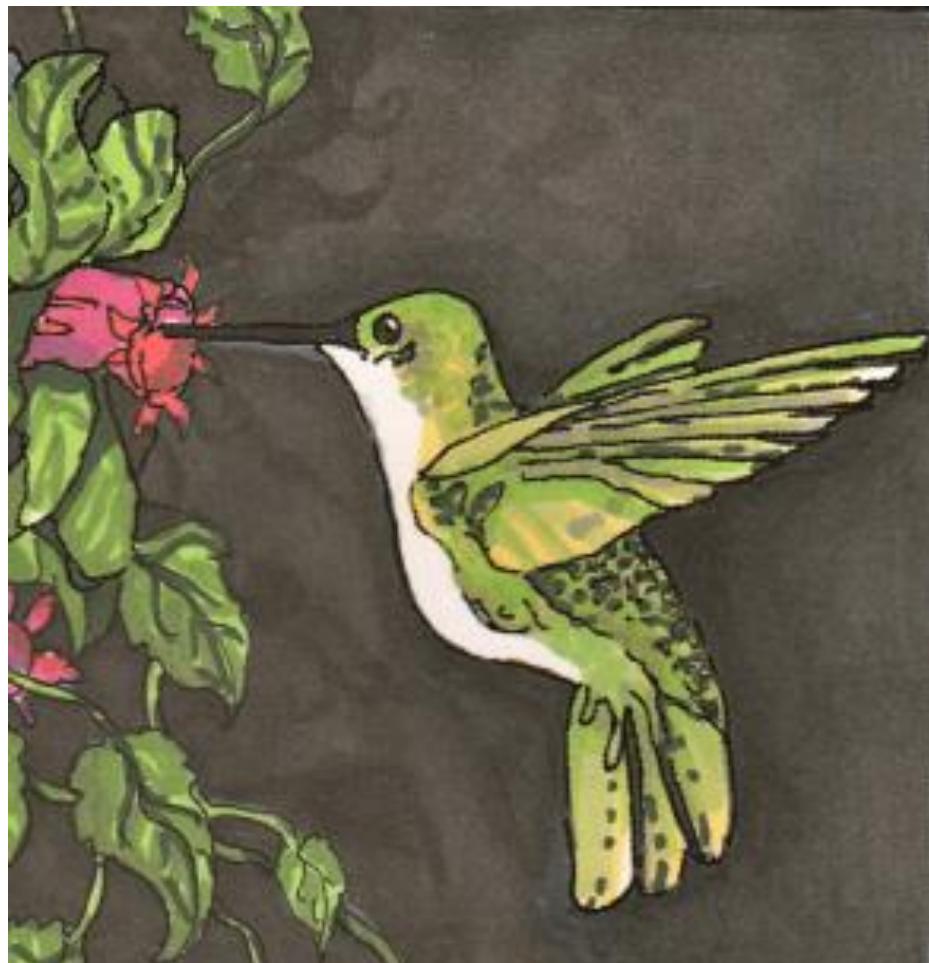
G is for Gull

This is the Gull we see in such numbers in our bays and harbors, flying gracefully and apparently aimlessly about,

but in reality ever keeping its bright black eyes fixed on the water in search of some floating morsel, which it deftly picks from the surface.



Bird-life : A Guide to the Study of our Common Birds, by Frank M. Chapman and Ernest Thompson Seton (1897).



H is for Hummingbird

When the Hummingbird says “Go!” other birds...go at once;

while the little warrior sometimes accelerates their flight, for his sharp beak is a weapon not to be despised.

Useful Birds and their Protection, by Edward Howe Forbush (1907).

I is for Ibis

The sacred Ibis still regularly visits Lower Egypt at the time of the inundation, coming from Nubia...

the Ibis is a symbol of the heart.

A Glossary of Greek Birds, by D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson (1895).



J is for Jay

While a friend and I were seated near a window, dining, we heard a song unlike that of any of the common birds with which we were familiar;

it was not loud nor ringing, nor at all like whistling, but the notes were formed into a sweet and somewhat complex bird melody...

it required from us only a lifting of the eyes to discover the singer, a Blue Jay, perching outside of the window on the lowest branch of a pine tree.

"The Song of the Blue Jay," by Isabel Goodhue (1919).





K is for Killdeer

At all times noisy and querulous...in the breeding season nothing can exceed the Killdeer's anxiety and alarm.

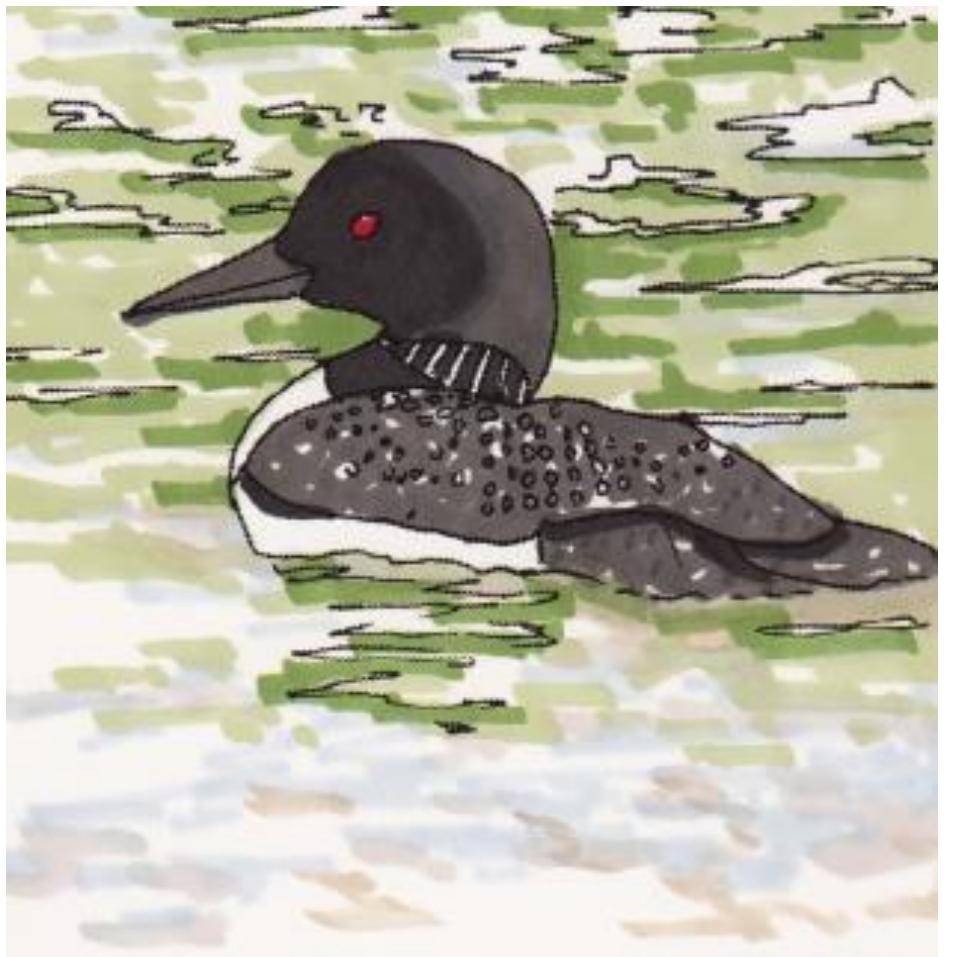
The incessant cry of *killdeer, killdeer*...as they waft themselves about over head or descend and fly around you, is almost deafening.

Popular Handbook of the Ornithology of Eastern North America, by Thomas Nuttall and Montague Chamberlain, (1891).

L is for Loon

Why, the Loon is the most astonishing and remarkable and astounding and wonderful and amazing diver you ever heard of!

Swimming Birds, by Norman Allison Calkins and Abby Morton Diaz (1878).





M is for Magpie

For the magpie, with exquisite skill,
Has invented a moss-covered cell,
Within which a whole family will
In the utmost security dwell.

"The Magpie's Nest: A Fable," in *The Child's Bijou*, by J.H.B. (1861).

N is for Nest

A bird's nest is the most graphic mirror of a bird's mind.

It is the most palpable example of those reasoning, thinking qualities with which these creatures are unquestionably very highly endowed.

Birds' Nests: An Introduction to the Science of Caiology, by Charles Dixon (1902).





O is for Oriole

One night in Guerrero I joined a group of men and boys who, with slingshots and pine torches, were hunting songbirds on their roosts.

They killed orioles, towhees, sparrows, and a few doves, all of which were later prepared for the kitchen.

Wildlife of Mexico : The Game Birds and Mammals, by A. Starker Leopold (1959).

P is for Penguin

This afternoon I saw two...engaged in a very
fierce fight...

After a couple of minutes, during which each
had the other down on the ground several times,
three or four other penguins ran up and
apparently tried to stop the fight.

Antarctic Penguins: A Study of their Social Habits, by Dr. G. Murray Levick
(1914).





Q is for Quail

The quail is prone to rustle for a living,
picking up a bit of grain here, an insect there,
spiced with a bit of vegetation to flavor,
and now and then a few grains of sand or fine
gravel to grind the mixture.

Quailology: The Domestification, Propagation, Care & Treatment of Wild Quail in Confinement, by Harry Wallas Kerr (1903).

R is for Robin

Birds enjoy the spray from a sprinkler
or even from a hose...

Further, a trickle of water in the right place
may create the mud that is needed by robins
and swallows in building their nests.

Attracting and Feeding Birds, Conservation Bulletin No. 1, Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of the Interior (1972).





S is for Swan

What graceful bird is this? It is a SWAN.

See, how she bends her long neck and spreads
out her great wings to catch the breeze.

Swans pass almost all their time swimming in
the water.

*Stories about Birds, For Little Folks : Twenty-three Engravings,
(Franklin Toys) [after 1855].*

T is for Turkey

Good cover for turkeys includes trees 6 or more inches in diameter and at least 30 feet high.

The birds roost in trees—usually in the largest ones—and frequently in trees in swamps.

Wild Turkeys on Southeastern Farms and Woodlands, by Dale H. Arner and Verne E. Davison, U.S. Department of Agriculture, (1963).





U is for Umbrella Bird

The decorations of the Umbrella-bird are as beautiful as they are bizarre...

a high, arching mass of feathers, overshadowing the entire head and beak, continually spreading and partly closing again, as the bird's emotions change.

The Bird, Its Form and Function, by C. William Beebe (1906).

V is for Vulture

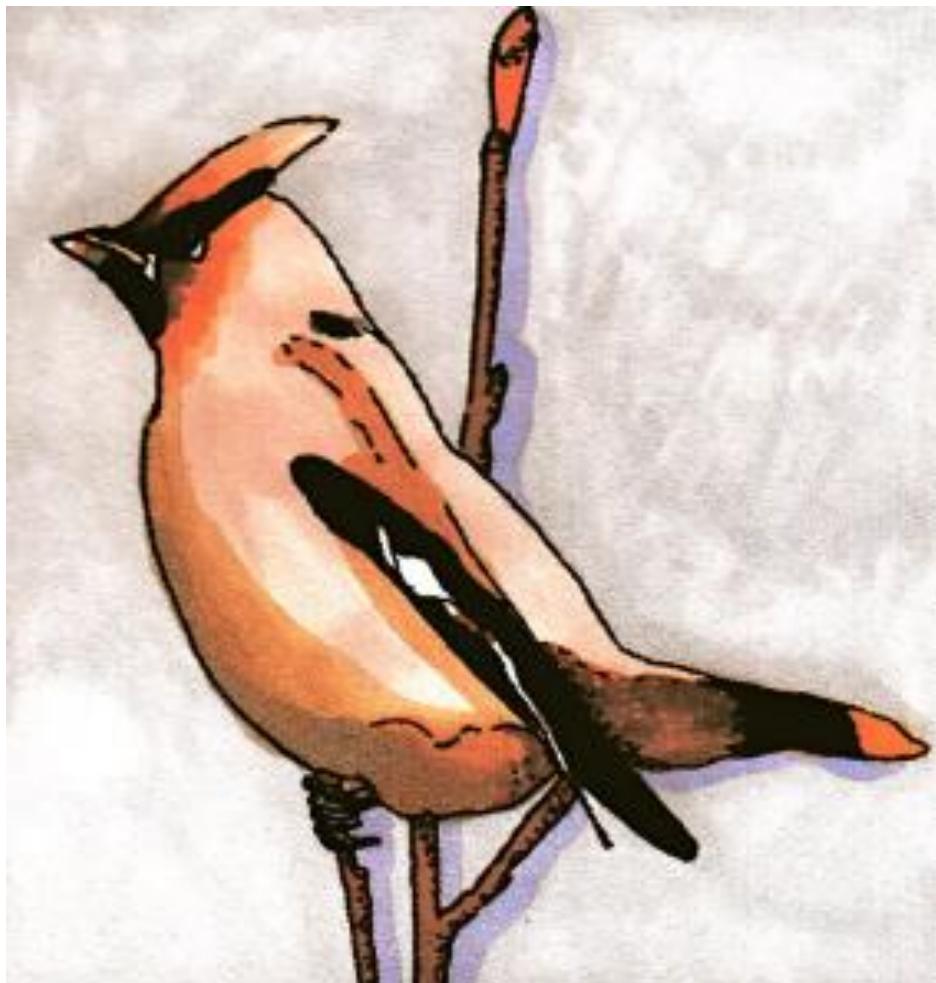
A pet vulture is, I think somewhat off the beaten track of aviculture.

The normal appearance of the animal is not attractive; his habits are distinctly repellent...

[but] his quiet unobtrusiveness developed in me an affection which I did not think I should have ever possessed for him.



"My Pet Vulture," by G.E. Low (1917).



W is for Waxwing

During the hard snow storm of Feb. 10, 1899,
a flock of about 50 Cedar Waxwings
were seen in a mountain ash tree,
feeding on the berries.

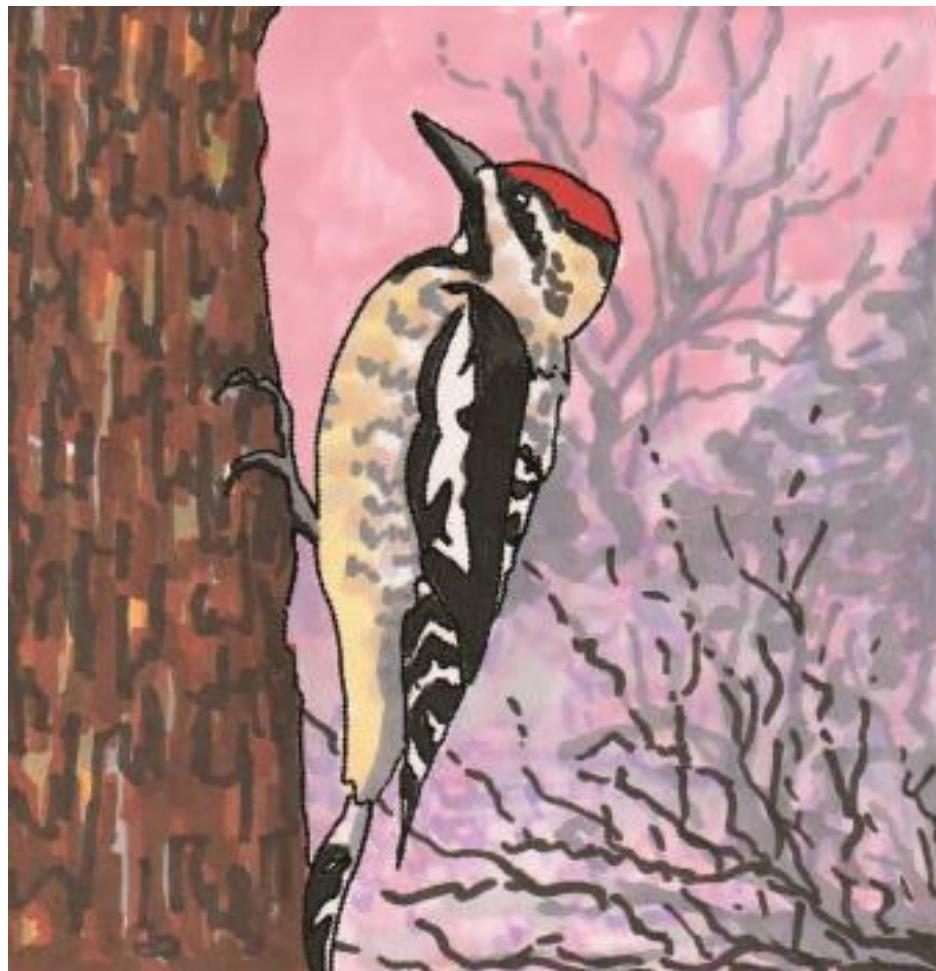
"The Bohemian Waxwing in Onondaga County, N.Y.," by A.W. Perrior
(1900).

X is for Xenops

A very extraordinary
and not inelegant little creature,
having a bill totally different
from any other bird...
Inhabits Brazil, but is rare.



*Zoological Illustrations : Or Original Figures and Descriptions of New, Rare,
or Interesting Animals*, by William Swainson (1821).



Y is for Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker

...a rapid drumming on a tree behind me
made me turn in that direction
to discover a big, red-headed woodpecker.

On going nearer it proved to be a
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
busy on a thrifty tree
extracting sap.

[untitled article] by Nellie H. Hunt, *The Wilson Bulletin* (1902).

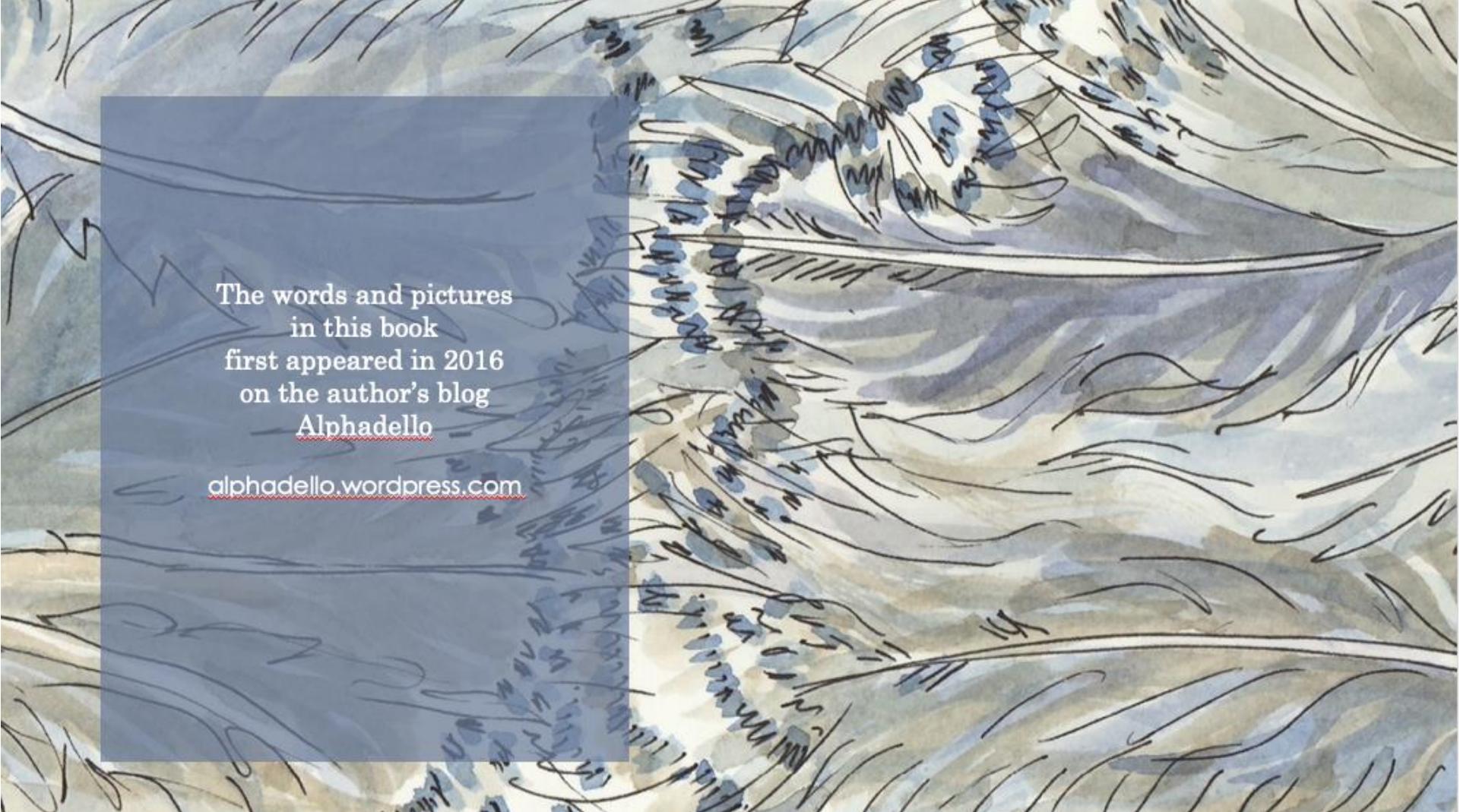
Z is for Zone-Tailed Hawk

While we were walking down the bed of the stream we were delighted to see a zone-tailed hawk fly from the leafy top of a tall cottonwood...

The hawk began screaming and was soon joined by its mate; both birds circled about in the vicinity as long as we were there.



"Zone-Tailed Hawk," *Life Histories of North American Birds of Prey*, by Arthur Cleveland Bent (1887).



The words and pictures
in this book
first appeared in 2016
on the author's blog
[Alphadello](#)

alphadello.wordpress.com